

CHAPTER 31. OFFICE SAFETY PROGRAM

3100. GENERAL. The purpose of the Office Safety Program is to protect Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) employees from injury caused by FAA office hazards. All organizations are obligated to provide employees with safe working conditions. This chapter presents the key program elements needed to fulfill that obligation.

3101. SCOPE. This chapter applies to facilities operated by the FAA for office work. It does not include office space set up in employees' homes to facilitate telecommuting.

3102. STANDARDS.

a. Congress enacted the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act of 1970 "to assure so far as possible every working man and woman in the Nation safe and healthful working conditions and to preserve our human resources." Section 19 (Federal Agency Safety Programs and Responsibilities) mandates that "the head of each agency shall (after consultation with representatives of the employees thereof) ... provide safe and healthful places and conditions of employment, consistent with the standards set under section 6." However, the U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has issued no standards specifically for the protection of workers from office safety hazards.

b. While there are no OSHA standards which specifically address office hazards, there are standards in 29 CFR 1910, such as Subpart D, Walking-Working Surfaces; Subpart E, means of Egress; Subpart K, Medical and First Aid; Subpart J, General Environmental Controls; and Subpart L, Fire Protection which are applicable to all workplaces, including offices. This order includes chapters for many of the applicable standards, and more are planned.

c. Consistent with the OSH Act, Executive Order 12196, Section 1-201(a), requires each Federal agency to "furnish to employees places and conditions of employment that are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm."

d. Finally, as part of the Department of Transportation, the FAA is instructed, in the Department's OSH Management Manual (DOT M 3902.7B, 7/13/95), to have an OSH program which includes the identification of hazardous conditions and work practices in all workplaces.

3103. KEY PROGRAM ELEMENTS.

a. Plan. A regional/center/headquarters Office Safety Program Plan shall be developed, implemented, and maintained. It shall be made available for inspection by employees and their authorized representatives. The Plan must include, at a minimum, the program elements identified in this paragraph (subparagraphs c through f below).

b. Program Administrator. A program administrator shall be designated to manage the regional/center/headquarters Office Safety Program. This person must meet the requirements of a “qualified person.” For the purposes of this chapter, “qualified person” means a person capable by education and/or specialized training of recognizing, evaluating, and prescribing mitigation for office safety hazards. The program administrator may coordinate program activities with other qualified persons in the region/center/headquarters.

c. Periodic Inspections. Formal inspections to identify hazardous conditions and/or work practices shall be conducted annually in all FAA office workplaces, as provided for in FAA Order 3900.19B, Chapter 2. Such inspection shall be conducted by technically qualified safety personnel, as defined in FAA Order 3900.19B, paragraph 11h. Hazards discovered shall be remediated or mitigated.

d. Employee Awareness. All FAA employees who work in office spaces must be provided with information about office hazards and the prevention of injury in their office environment. The method of information delivery (e.g., training sessions, printed messages, etc.) shall be determined by the program administrator, or by another qualified person designated by the program administrator. The information conveyed must be appropriate to the specific facility. Figure 31-1 presents a suggested topic list.

e. Hazard Reporting Procedure. The Office Safety Program Plan must provide for, and publicize, a procedure whereby employees are encouraged to report hazards. The procedure must be consistent with the provisions of FAA Order 3900.19B, Chapter 9, Reports by Employees on Hazardous Conditions, and ensure that reported hazards are addressed in a timely manner.

f. Program Evaluation. The Office Safety Program Plan shall include a section addressing periodic evaluations of the Office Safety Program, to be developed by the program administrator. Written documentation should include a description of implementation activities and an assessment of their effectiveness. Office Safety may be reported as a component of a more comprehensive OSH evaluation report.

Figure 31-1. EXAMPLES OF OFFICE SAFETY TOPICS**A. Hazards**

1. Falls: *Falls are the most common type of office accident, accounting for the greatest number of disabling injuries. They typically result from slips, trips, and falls from chairs and elevations.*
 - a) Slipping: *Immediately clean up all liquid spills, pencils, paper clips, and other items that present a slipping hazard.*
 - b) Tripping
 - (1) Cords in aisles: *Keep all electrical cords and phone cords out of traffic paths to prevent tripping. If this is absolutely impossible, securely tape the cord throughout its length to the walking surface or use a rubbercord ramp specifically designed to minimize the risk of tripping.*
 - (2) Clutter: *Aisles and walkways need to be kept free of obstructions. All employees need to practice good housekeeping.*
 - (3) Steps: *Differences in floor elevation need to be clearly marked, and handrails should be provided where there are four or more risers. Stairs need to be well lighted and free of defects or obstructions. Unless made of unpainted wood, they should have anti-slip treatment.*
 - (4) Defective (torn) carpet: *Rugs and mats with holes, tears, or other disrepairs which constitute a hazard shall be repaired or removed.*
 - c) Dangerous climbing: *Use step stools and ladders with braking devices, and not chairs, to reach objects which are too high to reach without assistance.*
 - d) Chairs
 - (1) Leaning back: *Excessive leaning or tipping while seated in a chair can result in falls.*
 - (2) Defective chairs: *Chairs should be periodically inspected and taken out of service if found to be defective.*
2. Falling objects
 - a) Top-heavy file cabinets: *Avoid overloading the top drawers of file cabinets. Open only one drawer at a time. Don't store heavy materials on top of cabinets.*
 - b) High furniture: *All furniture, such as bookcases, over 64" in height should be secured to the wall.*

3. Collisions

- a) Open drawers: *Keep desk drawers, file drawers, and pull-out writing surfaces shut when not in use.*
- b) Running, horseplay: *Never run in the office. Horseplay can cause injury and should not be tolerated.*
- c) Walking: *Carry only what you can reasonably handle while keeping your balance and a clear view of where you are going. Do not walk and read at the same time.*

4. Cuts

- a) Sharp objects: *Put away sharp objects which are not in use. For guillotine paper cutters, make sure the blade is left down and locked when not in use.*
- b) Sharp edges: *Guard the sharp edges of furniture.*
- c) Electric fans: *Electric fans located within 7 feet of the floor must be guarded (with not over 1/4 inch mesh) to prevent contact with the blades.*
- d) Paper: *Paper has sharp edges and can cause painful cuts. Use a sponge or other wetting device for envelopes.*
- e) Staples: *Use caution when unjamming a stapler. Never put your fingers into an automatic stapler.*
- f) Proper waste disposal: *Broken glass and similar sharp material should not be mixed with other contents of wastebaskets, unless the glass is wrapped separately and labeled prominently.*

5. Electrical

- a) Ungrounded appliances: *All electrical equipment should be grounded in accordance with the National Electrical Code.*
- b) Frayed wires: *All electrical cords should be examined on a routine basis. Do not use electrical cords if the cord insulation is broken or separated from the plug or the machine. The outlet covers and receptacles should also be examined for defects.*

6. Fire evacuation

- a) Unobstructed egress: *Office doors shall be free of obstructions at all times to permit egress.*
- b) Sprinkler heads: *Under no circumstances should materials be stacked within 18 inches of ceiling sprinkler heads or Halon nozzles.*

- c) Diagram displayed: *A plan or diagram of designated emergency egress routes shall be posted in a place readily available to employees. Information about the locations of fire extinguishers and related equipment shall also be made available.*
 - d) Fire drills: *Fire drills must be conducted at least annually.*
 - e) Microwave: *Attend the microwave when heating potentially combustible materials, such as bags of popcorn.*
7. Other
- a) Furniture hand traps: *When closing drawers in desks or filing cabinets, make sure your hands are held against the drawer face; grasp the handle if possible.*
 - b) Toner dust: *Only personnel who have been instructed in the proper toner replacement techniques should perform this duty.*
- B. Use of proper tools: *Use tools only for the specific purpose for which they are designed, e.g., a staple remover to remove staples.*
- C. Crime: *Be aware of potential situations where assaults may occur, such as in employee parking lots after hours. Implement measures such as escort requests where there is a reasonable fear of incident.*
- D. Reporting of building problems: *All employees need to be informed of the proper contact to make for emergency and non-emergency problems they may discover in their workplace.*